

Brentwood Borough Council

Members Allowances Scheme 2022/23

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

November 2021

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and our recommendations for the scheme for 2022/23.

Background

2. The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require councils to establish an *Independent Remuneration Panel*. The Council cannot alter or update its existing Scheme of Members Allowances without first considering a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel.
3. Local authority elected Members are entitled to receive allowances to compensate them for the role that they do and the responsibilities they assume on behalf of the communities they serve. A 'Basic Allowance' is paid to all Members of the authority to reflect the roles that they undertake. A 'Special Responsibility Allowance', is paid to those Members that have particular responsibilities within the Council's constitutional arrangements.
4. No additional subsistence or travel allowances are paid. However, Annual Council 2013 resolved that 'reasonable expenses' for external training and conferences are reimbursed, as required, and only with advance agreement of the Head of Paid Service.
5. The timing and process of the IRP's annual review was discussed in 2017/18. It was agreed that it would be more productive and useful to undertake the review alongside the Council's budget setting process in order to enable Members to scrutinise and consider the IRP's recommendations as part of their budget deliberations and decisions. This timing and process was put into place during 2018/19 and has continued since then.
6. In 2019/20 the IRP also reviewed a Parental Leave Policy and conditions for a carers allowances scheme and was subsequently included within the members allowance scheme in 2019/20.

The Independent Remuneration Panel

7. The Independent Remuneration Panel met on the 29th November 2021 to discuss Member Allowances Scheme for 2022/23 and comprised of:
 - Mr Michael Hawkins (Chair)
 - Mr Steve Marsh
 - Mr John Boylin (feedback by email)

Existing Scheme

8. In 2021/22 the member allowances were rounded down to the nearest £50, and new special responsibility allowances were introduced for the Chair and Vice Chair of Ordinary Council.

Political Structure

9. The Council consists of 37 members.
9. The current committee structure of the Council, as at November 2021, consists of the following:
 - Full Council (Annual, Ordinary & Extraordinary)
 - Planning & Licensing Committee
 - Audit & Scrutiny Committee
 - Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee
 - Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee
 - Community and Health Committee

Our Approach and considerations

10. The deliberations of the IRP were informed by:
 - The Council's current committee structure, and that there are currently no proposed changes to the structure for 2022.
 - Benchmarking information from Shire Districts in Essex.
 - Desktop research and contextual information regarding the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
 - Previous reports and recommendations from the IRP.
11. The IRP were mindful of the function which Councillors perform in protecting and enhancing local democracy by providing representation on issues of local concern and ensuring that the Council remains accountable to the community which it serves. Accordingly, the IRP followed the same principles as in previous years:
 - The need for Councillors to come from a wide range of backgrounds
 - The necessity to ensure some recompense for the time and effort spent in serving the community, whilst recognising that the work of Councillors should include a substantial voluntary contribution

- Recognition of the time and resource demands of training and development, as well as other activities: and
- Whilst recognising that individual Members could choose not to take their allowance in whole or part, the IRP were keen to ensure that the scheme should encourage and support local democracy by ensuring that personal financial constraints would not be a bar to office.

12. Additional factors considered by the IRP in preparing its report to Annual Council 2022 included:

- Budget pressures on the Council and the need for affordability.
- The impact of Covid-19 on the Council and its staff and Members.
- The Rochford/Brentwood partnership

13. The options considered by the IRP included:

Option	Analysis
That members allowances for 2022/23 remain unchanged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Allowances had increased by 1% in 2019/20, the first increase since 2014/15. • The Mayor and Deputy Mayor received an increase in 2019/20. • In 2021/22 members allowances were rounded down, along with the introduction of new SRAs for Chairs of Ordinary Council. • New Committee arrangements had been adopted in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, 2019. • There is currently proposed to be no change to the number of committees in 2022/23.
That members allowances for 2022/23 be increased in line with employees (option of 2% was considered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff received a 2% pay increase in 2021/22. • The MTFP includes a provisional 2% increase for staff for 2022/23.

Other Matters considered

14. It was noted that some other Council's set a Basic Allowance and then calculate their Special Responsibility Allowances as a proportion of the Basic amount, which could be reviewed for future modelling.

15. It was also discussed to review Rochford District Council member allowances and apply to them Brentwood's member structure for comparison and future discussion.

16. To continue to review Special responsibility allowances benchmarking across other Essex authorities for comparable data, including carer allowances and opposition allowances and ensure they are proportionable.

17. To review the Housing Revenue Account recharges for member allowances in 2022/23 to ensure the Housing is apportioned correctly.

Recommendations

15. After careful consideration of all the information provided the Independent Remuneration Panel recommend the following, with the total budget being no more than £275,800.

(i) That members allowances for 2022/23 remain unchanged as follows

<u>Members Allowances 2022-23</u>	Recommendation 2022-23
Basic Allowance	6,000
Leader	13,200
Deputy Leader	6,350
Leader of Main Opposition	5,350
Leader of Minority Opposition	2,650
Ordinary Council Chair	1,750
Ordinary Council Vice Chair	500
Committee Chair(s)	3,550
Committee Vice(s)	950

(ii) With Mayoral allowances for 2022/23 to also remain unchanged as follows:

<u>Members Allowances 2022-23</u>	Recommendation 2022-23
Mayor	4,500
Deputy Mayor	1,500